Remarks:

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of the claims as set forth in the Official Action of August 4, 2005, and requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections in view of the forgoing amendments to the claims and the following remarks. The applicant has amended each of the independent claims of the present application, except claim 19 which has been cancelled, to emphasize the unique function of the vertically tapered protruding elements and slots that are found on the vertical edges of the wall panels making up the present invention. These features and the corresponding action achieved by these features are not disclosed or suggested by the prior art.

The vertically tapered protruding elements and slots are designed to pull confronting surfaces of laterally adjacent wall panels together as the tapered elements become increasingly engaged. This pull by the increasingly engaged tapered elements eliminates any need for any outside compressive force to join the wall panels to each other or to hold the wall panels once assembled. This feature is not disclosed in Hume USP 5,608,998. Hume discloses a panel 10 having a similar purpose to the panels of the present invention. Hume specifically states in the summary of the invention that "... mechanical fasteners or snap-fit members are not required to join the panels ..." (Column 2, lines 46-47) The vertical ends of panel 10 of Hume are disclosed to include an integral L-shaped channel 16 which is adapted to receive the unaltered opposite end 18 of an identical panel. (Column 4, lines 6-8) "It is important that the end 18 be unaltered. This permits the panel assembly to be cut to fit a specific manhole perimeter without special forming tools..." (Column 4, lines 9-11) That is, Hume specifically teaches away from having a special shape on both ends of the panel, which is required by the present applicant's claims.

Bradley et al USP 6,773,206 also fails to disclose or suggest the vertically tapered protruding elements and slots of the applicant that are designed to pull confronting surfaces of laterally adjacent wall panels together as the tapered elements become increasingly engaged. Bradley et al discloses a support pile repair jacket 1 designed for use in a water environment rather than a subterranean location, the jacket 1 having a plurality of panels joined by one or more live hinges 8. The jacket 1 also includes two longitudinal edges 4 that are joined together by a variety of sealing structures 5. None of the sealing structures 5 include the vertically tapered protruding elements and slots of the applicant. Further, other structures are relied upon to full the confronting surfaces of the two longitudinal edges 4 together. The Bradley et al abstract states "Banding is provided to pull the opposing edges into a tight relationship and trapping the seal there between:" Looking to the Bradley et al specification one discovers "In order to bring the outer circumference of the jacket 1 back into its original circular shape, the edges 4 are pulled together by banding 10 which will settle in annular grooves between the annular corrugations 3. The banding 10 shown in FIG. 2 is of the conventional ratchet type otherwise known as hose clamps in automobile engines, for example. The banding 10 is tightened within the groove by ratchet screw 10a which is well known." (Column 4, lines 24-32.)

Bradley et al provides other structures to pull the hinged jacket panels together. "Turning now to FIG. 4 which shows a different fastening system for closing the jacket onto its edges 4. This fastening system consists of a buckle system 16 of the over center type. To this end, the buckle 16 includes two plates 17 and 19 which are riveted by rivets 17a and 19a, respectively, to the top or outside surfaces of the respective corrugations 3. Plate 17 has a

longitudinal hasp 18 mounted thereon which is pivotal around pivot 18a. The other plate 19 has a pivotal handle 20 mounted thereon which is pivotal around pivot 20a. The handle 20 also carries a hook 21 thereon. When it is desired to lock the two edges 4 of the jacket together including the seal 5, the hasp 18 is placed within the hook 21 on handle 20 and the handle 20 is then moved to a closed position, as shown in FIG. 4, whereby the hook 21 pulls the hasp 18 and thereby the edges 4 together until the hook 21 is pulled past the pivot 20a which position is over the center of the buckle system 16." (Column 5 lines 12-27) Figures 8 and 9 of Bradley et al illustrate another system for connecting the edges 4 including connectors 30 and 31 that include serrations. "Once the serrations are inserted into each other they will form a planar surface facing at the interior of the jacket." (Column 6, lines 38-40) However, unlike the vertically tapered protruding elements and slots of the applicant that are designed to pull confronting surfaces of laterally adjacent wall panels together, the serrations of the edge connectors 30 and 31 Bradley et al do NOT pull the edges 4 of the jacket together – another structure such as the banding 10 or buckle system 16 must be employed to accomplish this function. Further, no combination of Bradley et al with Hume would result in the applicant's claimed structure.

Janssen et al USP 4,310,372 discloses fittings 12 for piping 10, the fittings 12 being assembled from three identically molded pieces 18a, 18b, 18c, that form 120° segments of the fitting 12, the pieces being joined along longitudinal edges 20 and 21. The edges 20 and 21 include various triangular ridges 22 , 28 and grooves 24, 30 forming contiguous surfaces, which along with end surfaces 26, 27, 32 and 33 are intended to be solvent welded together with outwardly protruding raised portions 34 and 35. "These portions [34 and 35] can be

configured so that they can be utilized in conjunction with additional locking means, either to hold newly assembled sections together during manufacture or to provide additional strength to the joints so that the fitting can be used under high pressure conditions. This locking can be achieved by securing a locking element, such as the C-shaped clamp 37, over the portions 34 and 35 so as to hold the leading and receiving portions 20 and 21 together under a clamping force. Such a clamp 37 can comprise, for example, an extruded length PVC that is slipped onto or snapped over the portions 34 and 35." (Column 4, line 66-Column 5, line 10). There is no suggestion in Janssen et al that any portion of the longitudinal edges 20 and 21 should include the vertically tapered surfaces claimed by the applicant. Further, no combination of Bradley et al and Hume with Janssen et al would result in the applicant's claimed structure.

Benner et al USP 5,930,972 discloses "a frame structure assembled from frame limbs for a switch gear cabinet in which the frame limbs are preferably designed in mirror-image like manner in relation to their cross section diagonals and in the interior region of the frame structure comprise two receiving formations provided with fastening rebates for fastening mounting rails, the said receiving formations being orientated **parallel** to the associated exterior sides of the frame structure." (Column 1, lines 4-12) There is no suggestion that this structure is for use in a subterranean environment or is intended to solve any problem identified by the applicant. Applicant submits that this patent is not at all relevant to the issues of patentability presented by the present application. Applicant understands the Examiner to rely on this reference merely to show a dovetail structure, but that does not mean that is properly combinable with the other art of record to provide a basis for any rejection of

the applicant's claimed invention. Benner et al states that "[i]t is the object of the invention to provide a frame structure of the type [previously described], in which in a simple manner differently designed mounting rails may be positioned rapidly and firmly in the rebates of the frame limbs. This object is attained according to the invention in that the receiving formations pass into terminal sections bent over once or twice, forming an open dovetail groove or a closed dovetail groove for fixing the mounting rails provided with appropriate engagement formations." (Column 1, lines 28-37) However, unlike the applicant's claimed structure, Benner et al does not disclose any vertically tapered protruding dovetail elements and dovetail slots that are designed to pull confronting surfaces of laterally adjacent wall panels together as the tapered elements become increasingly engaged. Thus, even if Benner et al were to be combined with Bradley et al and Hume and Janssen et al, such a combination would NOT result in the applicant's claimed structure.

Jones Jr. USP 6,357,194 discloses the joining of boards including those made of particleboard and wafer board together with a series of tapered dovetail joints that are spaced along an edge of a board. Applicant understands the Examiner to rely on this reference merely to show a dovetail structure, but that does not mean that is properly combinable with the other art of record to provide a basis for any rejection of the applicant's claimed invention any more than Benner et al. Further, there is no disclosure in Jones, Jr., of vertically tapered protruding dovetail elements and dovetail slots in the same sense as that term is used by the applicant. The dovetail slots of Jones Jr. all extend from one face of a board to the opposite face of the board, which if substituted for structures of Hume or Bradley et al, would provide a series of undesirable pathways for the intrusion of moisture between the inside and outside of the

manhole lining or repair jacket, respectively. There is no suggestion in Jones Jr. that the dovetail slots should be aligned with the vertical axis of the structure, which would be in the same direction as pin 48 or nail 54. Thus, even if Jones Jr. were to be combined with Bradley et al, Hume, Janssen et al, and Benner et al such a combination would NOT result in the applicant's claimed structure.

Dargie USP 5,265,974 discloses a safety net and a safety net system, particularly for use in openings for access to deep well pumping station, such as for sewage, so that upon removal of the hatch cover, the opening is protected, or protectable by the safety net. As such, the safety net structure of Dargie is directed to the same field of endeavor as the applicant. While there are structural differences that could be identified, the applicant has elected to cancel independent claim 19, although that or a similar claim may be advanced in a continuation of the present application. As to claims 13 and 25, applicant urges their patentability on the basis of the patentability of the other features recited in the claim or any parent claim other than the features of the security net. Thus, even if Dargie were to be combined with Bradley et al, Hume, Janssen et al, Benner et al and Jones Jr., such a combination would NOT result in the applicant's structure claimed in claims 13 or 25.

Torngren USP 3,826,032 discloses a trap for crustaceans (a lobster pot) used at the bottom of the ocean. This device is not directed to the same field of endeavor as that of the applicant, nor does it seek to solve a similar problem. Applicant submits that this patent is not at all relevant to the issues of patentability presented by the present application. The citation of this reference does not affect the patentability of claims 13 or 25 as applicant urges the patentability of these two claims on the basis of the patentability of the features recited in

the claim or any parent claim other than the features of the security net. Even if Torngren were to be combined with Bradley et al, Hume, Janssen et al, Benner et al, Jones Jr., and Dargie, such a combination would NOT result in the applicant's structure claimed in claims 13 or 25.

As a result of this amendment, all the claims of the present application are now believed to be allowable, and the present application should therefore be passed to issue. Should any informality remain that can be addressed by an Examiner's amendment, the subscribing attorney would welcome a telephone conference.

Respectfully submitted,

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